



MEDIA RELEASE

1 OCTOBER 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## NATIONAL SPORTING ORGANISATIONS COMMIT TO LANDMARK TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE INCLUSION MEASURES

In a world first, eight peak sporting bodies have committed to implementing governance that supports a greater level of inclusion for trans and gender diverse people in their sports.

At a launch held today at the Sydney Cricket Ground, leading national sporting organisations (NSOs) came together to unveil their policies and guidelines relating to the participation of trans and gender diverse people. The NSOs are:

- AFL
- Hockey Australia
- Netball Australia
- Rugby Australia
- Tennis Australia
- Touch Football Australia
- UniSport Australia
- Water Polo Australia

In addition, a range of NSOs have also committed to developing trans and gender diverse inclusion frameworks for their sports following the launch, including:

- Athletics Australia
- Australian Dragon Boating Federation
- Bowls Australia
- Diving Australia
- Football Federation Australia
- Golf Australia
- Gymnastics Australia
- Judo Australia
- Softball Australia
- Squash Australia
- Surf Life Saving Australia
- Swimming Australia
- Triathlon Australia

After launching their own trans and gender diverse inclusion governance in 2019, Cricket Australia have also committed to supporting other NSOs throughout this process.

This initiative, spearheaded by ACON's Pride in Sport program, Australia's only program specifically designed to assist sporting organisations with the inclusion of people of diverse sexualities and genders at all levels, was undertaken following the identification of a need for national guidance on how NSOs can be inclusive of trans and gender diverse people.

Pride in Sport National Program Manager, Beau Newell, said that the joint commitment made by the NSOs marks a major moment in Australian sport.

"This launch demonstrates a fundamental shift within Australian sport towards the greater inclusion of trans and gender diverse athletes. By formalising their stand to be inclusive of trans and gender diverse people, these Australian sports have shown a true and tangible commitment to providing environments where everyone involved is treated with respect and dignity," Newell said.

"Sport has an amazing opportunity to provide a safe and inclusive environment to all people, including people with diverse genders and sexualities. As a country that holds sport very close to our hearts, it also has a unique position to be able to help change attitudes of many Australians. The demand for more inclusive sporting cultures makes clear that Australian society increasingly expects that sport should be for everyone, including trans and gender diverse people."

Data from the National LGBTI Health Alliance state that trans and gender diverse adults are nearly 11 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population, with 35% of trans and gender diverse adults having attempted



suicide in their lifetime. Further, international research concludes that trans and gender diverse people are much less likely to participate in sport due to fear of transphobic discrimination from other players, coaches and club officials.

Lifeline CEO Colin Seery said: “At Lifeline, we are well aware of the detrimental impacts of isolation, rejection and discrimination – impacts that can be so devastating to mental wellbeing, they can lead to suicide.

“A sense of belonging is one of our most important human needs and sport provides a great opportunity for connecting with others. Today’s commitment by these national sporting organisations to make their sports more welcoming, inclusive and safe for all Australians is a positive step towards saving lives,” Seery said.

ACON’s Manager of Trans and Gender Diverse Equity, Teddy Cook said: “We know that trans athletes can be targeted on the unfounded basis that we affirm our gender to seek a competitive advantage in sport, but this is untrue and incredibly damaging to all – trans people and our cis allies.

“While many trans people across Australia are members of very inclusive sports clubs, many also report that joining a club is an intimidating and frightening experience. The commitment from these sports provides much needed guidance to the many clubs working hard to be the open and inclusive sport they want to be for all athletes, including those athletes who are trans.

“It is the right of every player, coach, volunteer and fan to feel accepted and affirmed, on and off the sporting field, including trans and gender diverse people, and we know that when this happens, mental and physical health outcomes dramatically improve,” Cook said.

ACON Vice-President and Co-Founder of Pride in Sport, Andrew Purchas (OAM), heralded the launch as world-first move: “I congratulate all the NSOs that have made this landmark commitment in working towards a progressive and welcoming Australia, and encourage others to consider making their sports an inclusive place for all. We are proud of community sports clubs who continue to welcome and affirm their trans players, and to those who look forward to doing so in the near future.”

**For more information on the guidelines, please visit [prideinsport.com.au/trans](http://prideinsport.com.au/trans)**

**People needing support can contact Lifeline (24 hours a day) on 13 11 14 or chat to a Crisis Supporter online at [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au) (7pm-midnight).**

**ACON provides counselling support for LGBTIQ people and those affected by HIV. To make an inquiry, call (02) 9206 2000 or visit [www.acon.org.au](http://www.acon.org.au)**

**The following services are also available for mental health and wellbeing assistance:**

- Q Life – 1800 184 527
- Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511
- Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636

## **ADDITIONAL QUOTES FROM NSOs**

**Hockey Australia CEO Matt Favier:**

“Hockey has always been proud of its inclusive nature, and we have a celebrated history of diversity and inclusion. Inclusion is one of Hockey Australia’s values, and we are proud to be demonstrating our commitment to this value. Hockey Australia welcomes everybody, exactly as they are.

“The release of these guidelines is a relatively small gesture from the sport, but one that we know is so very significant for the people it will impact.”



“These guidelines have been developed in consultation with all of our Member Associations, and we are grateful for their contribution and support. It is wonderful to see a truly whole of sport commitment to the inclusion of the trans and gender diverse community. Thank you also to Pride in Sport for their support and guidance through the development of these guidelines.

“Sport can bring people together like few things in society. The collective message sport is sending today is a powerful one. Hockey Australia is proud to be standing side by side with this group of national sporting organisations to let trans and gender diverse people know they are welcome in our codes.”

**Netball Australia CEO Marne Fechner:**

“This policy speaks to Netball’s commitment to providing welcoming and inclusive places for all people to play netball. It’s our job as leaders to provide an environment where transgender and gender diverse people feel welcome to participate our great game, while also taking into account athlete safety and protecting the integrity of the sport. We continue to work hard to ensure netball is a sport for all.

“We feel proud to release our policy as a part of the Pride In Sport announcement today. Policies and guidelines such as these continue to improve inclusion and diversity standards across Australian sport.”

**Rugby Australia interim Chief Executive Rob Clarke:**

“Rugby Australia wishes to applaud Pride in Sport for their efforts in ensuring all communities feel safe, welcomed and included in their chosen sport.

“Our code aligns with these values and has worked hard over the years to remove barriers for people wanting to play Rugby.

“In 2014, Rugby AU joined forces with four sporting codes to sign a Statement of Commitment for the Australian Human Rights Commissions and Australian Sports Commission’s Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework.

“Since then we have introduced Community Rugby guidelines which support trans and gender diverse people playing Rugby, and have received positive feedback from clubs.”

**Tennis Australia CEO Craig Tiley:**

“As a sport, tennis is unwavering in playing our part to ensure an inclusive society, and we welcome the introduction of these guidelines in making our communities accessible for all.

“We will continue to promote and celebrate inclusiveness and diversity, and are proud of our efforts to welcome all members of our community to participate in our sport. The tennis court and club should be a place of enjoyment and comfort for everyone, where people from all walks of life get to know each other without fear of judgement or harassment.

“Inclusivity is at the very core of what we do, and that also involves creating an environment where people feel safe and comfortable to be themselves.”

**Touch Football Australia CEO Jamie O’Connor:**

“Touch Football helps people connect and provides a community for people to belong to. That’s why it’s so important that in delivering our sport we provide an environment that is safe, inclusive and welcoming for everyone, no matter a person’s background, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age or anything else. In Touch Football, we are always striving to provide a ‘place on the field for everyone’, a sport that ‘everyone can play’, but we can’t just say that without action – we need to provide meaningful guidelines and resources for those who deliver and participate in our sport so we can create Touch communities that are genuinely safe and inclusive.”



## AFL

AFL General Manager of Inclusion and Social Policy Tanya Hosch: “I want to thank the community members who have been patiently engaged with us during this process, in particular the gender diverse community who were extremely generous in sharing with us their experience and views which has influenced our policies.

“Australian football is a game for everyone, regardless of background, ethnicity, race, religion, gender or gender identity. The AFL is committed to supporting gender diverse people participate in our sport and has developed policies to ensure they can participate in a safe and inclusive environment. We don’t want anyone to experience discrimination in our game.

“We are pleased to have also developed an implementation guide to assist community clubs to understand their responsibilities, and actions in way that will enhance the inclusiveness for all. This will be released in the coming weeks.”

AFL Chief Executive Officer Gillon McLachlan: “We know that inclusion and belonging delivers real social benefits for individuals and communities, and we want to send a message that all are welcome in our game.

“We are pleased to collaborate with all the major sporting organisations of Australia in taking this important practical and symbolic step towards improved inclusion in sport and the community more generally.”

### **UniSport Australia:**

“UniSport Australia applauds and congratulates Pride in Sport and the nine national sporting organisations involved in today’s announcement. The new sports specific trans and gender diverse policies are a significant step forward to providing a safe and inclusive environment in sport across all levels of sport in which we are proud to be part of. As the peak body of university sport in Australia, UniSport is committed to providing opportunities for student-athletes that recognise that everyone has a fundamental right to play sport in an environment with dignity and respect.

“UniSport Australia looks forward to continuing to work with Pride in Sport, our 43 university members and the national sporting organisations to deliver safe, inclusive sporting competitions for student athletes.”

### **Water Polo Australia CEO Richard McInnes:**

“As a founding member of Pride in Sport, Water Polo Australia is proud to join today with leading national sporting organisations to further extend our sport inclusion policies to include transgender and gender diverse people.

“Water Polo Australia wants all people, from athletes to officials and volunteers, to feel welcome in our sport and we are committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for everyone including people with diverse genders and sexualities.”

### **Cricket Australia Interim CEO Nick Hockley:**

“Today is a significant moment in Australian sport with this announcement clearly demonstrating a fundamental shift towards making sure that a number of national sporting organisations are all committed to further developing an inclusive culture in sport.

“It’s been 12 months since Cricket Australia launch its own policy for transgender and gender diverse players and we are proud to see other national sporting organisations coming together to ensure that sport is welcoming to everyone.

“Discrimination of any sort has no place in our game and all of Australian Cricket is driven to ensure all cricketers can participate in a safe and inclusive environment.”



## **MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

### **ACON / Pride in Sport**

David Alexander, Media and Communications | 0428 477 042 | dalexander@acon.org.au

### **Lifeline Australia**

Ina Mullin, National Manager, Communications and Public Affairs | 0408 407 376 | ian.mullin@lifeline.org.au

### **Hockey Australia**

Nic Kerber, Media & PR Manager | 0448 994 435 | nic.kerber@hockey.org.au

### **Netball Australia**

Jenna Handreck, Media and Communications Manager | 0400 812 196 | jenna.handreck@netball.com.au

### **Rugby Australia**

Liz Manawaiti, General Manager, Marketing & Communications | 0497 087 047 | liz.manawaiti@rugby.com.au

### **Tennis Australia**

Victoria Bush, Publicity | vbush@tennis.com.au

### **Touch Football Australia**

Alice Ellis, General Manager, Marketing & Communications | 0436 668 327 | alice.ellis@touchfootball.com.au

### **UniSport Australia**

Leith Brooke, Commercial Manager | 0421 281 421 | leith.brooke@unisport.com.au

### **Water Polo Australia**

Lauren Ryan, Director, BTB Consulting | 0402 162 807 | lauren.ryan@btbconsulting.com.au

### **Cricket Australia**

Kristene Reynolds, Head of Communications | 0421 052 265 | Kristene.reynolds@cricket.com.au

### **AFL**

Will Carter, Media Manager | 0407 198 944 | will.carter@afl.com.au

### **ENDS**

**ACON encourages the use of the Australian Press Council's [Advisory Guideline for Reporting on persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.](#)**